



DEBRA BOWEN

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As Balloting Begins for Military and Overseas Voters, Secretary Bowen Offers Tailored Resources

SACRAMENTO – Starting today, county elections officials can begin mailing ballots to California voters serving in the armed forces or living abroad, and Secretary of State Debra Bowen is encouraging these voters to take advantage of state and federal resources available through her online one-stop shop.

“For Californians living abroad or stationed overseas, voting isn’t as easy as simply heading down the street to the neighborhood polling place or putting a vote-by-mail ballot in the mailbox a few days before Election Day,” said Secretary Bowen, the state’s chief elections officer. “Voting takes advanced planning for eligible voters living overseas, and my website offers resources for ensuring these voters have enough time to review, vote and return their ballots by the 8:00 p.m. Election Day deadline.”

Recognizing the extra time needed to get ballots to and from faraway locations, county elections officials frequently begin mailing ballots to military and overseas voters as much as 60 days ahead of Election Day under California Elections Code section 3103(b). The federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act requires military and overseas ballots be sent no later than 45 days before a federal Election Day.

Under an agreement reached last spring with the United States Department of Justice when 11 California counties delayed ballot delivery to military and overseas voters, the California Secretary of State provided staff in all 58 county elections offices with training on important deadlines and requirements of the law.

To qualify as a military or overseas voter in California elections, a person must be:

- An active member of the United States armed forces or an auxiliary branch;
- A U.S. citizen temporarily living outside U.S. territorial limits or the District of Columbia;
- A person living on a merchant vessel documented under U.S. law; or
- A spouse or dependent of a member of the U.S. military or an auxiliary branch.

California military and overseas voters – known federally as “special absentee voters” – may use a Federal Post Card Application to register to vote and request a ballot simultaneously. California law also allows special absentee voters to request ballots from and return them to county elections officials by fax.

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According to the U. S. Election Assistance Commission, nearly 103,000 special absentee ballots were transmitted to California military and overseas voters for the November 2008 presidential election.

To download a copy of the Federal Post Card Application and access a wide variety of information, go to www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_mov.htm. This one-stop shop for military and overseas voters includes a portal to county elections office websites, a step-by-step guide on how to register and vote, and links to common questions and answers provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

The California Secretary of State's office also offers a dedicated email address that links military and overseas voters to staff who can offer additional assistance: mov@sos.ca.gov.

The last day to register to vote in the November 6 General Election is October 22. The last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot is October 26.

Keep up with the latest California election news, trivia and tips by following [@CASOSvote](https://twitter.com/CASOSvote) on Twitter.

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